

threaten their economic profits and political power, or if the "left" is ever able to develop an opposition movement within the United States. Until either event occurs it seems likely that the veneer of democracy and the reality of plutocracy will be allowed to persist but with increasing contradictions as economic conditions deteriorate.

Fascism, like racism, colonialism, and imperialism, is much more than politics. It is a set of mutually-supportive values which go to make up a culture. Cultures do not change radically from one day to the next, although they may appear to do so under certain conditions (such as after a decisive military or political defeat). A sufficient breathing spell usually will allow the old cultural values to surface once more, perhaps ironically to be even encouraged by the former enemy who now finds such behavior useful.

Tragically, fascist tendencies are deeply imbedded in many of the cultures of the world. We must be alert to these tendencies in our own part of the Earth and not try to naively regard fascism as a now-departed localized European disease which can safely be relegated to the history books. Fascism has dominated much of American soil for four or five centuries and it is a reality for the nineteen-eighties as well.

Critique

Totalitarianism, whether from the left or from the right, in modern society has posed a serious threat to free men and women. In a provocative study Jack D. Forbes has focused on the cultural and historical implication of the major anti-democratic doctrine of fascism. He has accurately stated the conditions of fascism: society and government are organized along totalitarian lines, intensely racist, nationalist, militarist, terrorist, and imperialist. In fact, fascism has traditionally been considered to develop in nations that are materially wealthy and more "advanced." On the one hand, communism has been associated with poor and "underdeveloped" societies; on the other hand, fascism has

been regarded as post-industrial and post-democratic. (Forbes would question whether the United States, for example, has reached the democratic stage of development.) And fear plays a major role in the success of fascism.

Forbes' analysis does not really concern itself with the economic aspects of fascism such as the corporate state that seeks to resolve conflict by creating worker syndicates, employer syndicates, and government syndicates. In Italy in the 1920s under Mussolini the political doctrine of the fascists was the "all-inclusive omnipotence of the state," and the economic doctrine was "the fusion of all classes into a single ethical and economic reality." Work stoppages were outlawed and conflict had to be resolved to achieve the goal of enhancing the power and glory of the state. Emanating from the modern urban industrial society is the condition of alienation, the feeling of being alone, unwanted and unloved. An economic depression will shatter the stability in society and serve as a catalyst for a pre-condition to fascism's success.

The style of fascist leaders is to promise to restore traditional values and seek to destroy those persons responsible for the unprecedented changes which cast men and women adrift in a dangerous, uncharted sea. Discipline is necessary. Moreover, fascism cuts across all economic and social groups attempting to settle the material and psychological insecurities of large populations. Fascism has been defined as the "revolution of the classes of order." Totalitarianism, with all the tools of industrial society at the disposal of the leaders, becomes a reality, paving the way for the state masses.

Forbes' analysis is more profound than the traditional interpretations of fascism. He has traced the development of fascism back to earlier times, overlaying significant events to his thesis. He challenges the Euro-Anglo interpretation of history and links up major historical developments. His view, for example, of Spanish control of the American colonies represented a "heavy dose" of fascism. One may ask, however, is the Spanish control, exploitation and, yes, even paternalism, examples of ethnocentrism in its more violent form? Should the humaneness of Spanish influence also be considered? He responds that the characteristics of fascism were present: "bigotry, crusading zeal, racial superiority ideas, spying, treason, protection of the wealthy classes, autocracy . . ."

Writing from the vantage point of the 1980s, white historians have questioned the earlier simplistic interpretations of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democracy. Certainly that "democracy" excluded blacks, Indians, women, and the poor, since it was modeled on the ancient Athenian system. It is clear that these and other evils were compromised and were not resolved to the complete satisfaction of the masses. For example, though the Civil War produced the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments white Americans devised other systems to keep blacks in an inferior position. This newer arrangement was accepted by the north after 1877. Racism persisted. Government policies continued to represent the interests of the powerful. The upheavals of the 1960s, however, caused white historians and their students to challenge the earlier one-dimensional view of American history. One senses a growing unease among historians that they have mistreated minorities in their earlier writings.

Forbes is justified in asserting that fascism is "very much alive throughout the Americas," and he effectively documents the charge. Yet to what degree is American society fascist today? Can the United States be compared with Latin American countries of today or colonial Spain of the past? Is there any quantitative evidence of minority gains to sustain the assertion? Have reformer-radicals been completely silenced and ineffective? And is social class preempted by membership in an ethnic group? American society has generally been flexible enough to prevent violent upheavals by "allowing" its deprived members a certain degree of access to the "corporate mainstream." Relative economic abundance has made the United States an affluent and middle-class nation in comparison to other nations, has provided a high standard of living, and has produced a favorable economic and social environment for American political development. This duality of the American liberal-reform tradition (which should be explored) and fascist tendencies poses one of the great enigmas in modern history.

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